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ABSTRACT

Institutional effectiveness can be defined as the extent to which internal priorities coincide with the priorities of the external groups that provide funding and support for the institution. If a lack of congruence exists between these priorities, a college administrator has the options of attempting to change the values of the external groups or of supporting those values and changing institutional activities. In Arizona, a study was undertaken to assess the priorities of administrators and external groups for a rural and an urban community college district. Legislators, state board members, and registered voters were defined as the significant external groups, and college administrators were asked to supply potency weights for each of these groups. College administrators and external groups were asked to assign priorities to 60 college activities, and their levels of agreement were correlated. The study revealed that the level of agreement between external groups and administrators in the rural district was 0.54 (where 1.0 would indicate complete agreement); while the external groups and administrators in the urban district achieved a 0.59 level of agreement. Significant differences in priorities existed between the groups in the areas of services to non-high school graduates and minority groups and the provision of off-campus services (which administrators ranked more highly) and services for the handicapped and community (which the external groups considered more important). (HB)

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DETERMINING PUBLIC PRIORITIES AND SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE MISSIONS

An Application of Mission Study to Assess Organizational Effectiveness

by

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Presented to:

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An Application of Mission Study
To Assess Organizational Effectiveness

Once the mission study is completed, what happens next? The awareness to change, modify or redefine mission is a start; but, not enough. For the administrators, (the presumed and entrusted leadership of the college) must remain the question of what such a study should mean. This paper covers four topics in answer to that question:

1. The concept of institutional effectiveness using mission data,
2. Application of this concept to a rural and urban college district as specific examples,
3. The meaning of important differences,
4. Implication for needs assessment.

Institutional effectiveness can be defined as the extent to which internal priorities coincide with the priorities of the most important external groups. They are those groups that control resources and whose support is critical to the survival of the college (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978, p. 37). In this view, institutional effectiveness is an external evaluation. It is the type or nature of the external group that makes the evaluation crucial. For example, if the legislature favorably judges the college's effectiveness, then that is critically important in instances where the legislature determines college revenues. If a college needs to obtain voter override of tax limitations, then voting citizens are an important external group.

Secondly, the definition of institutional effectiveness is not necessarily an absolute or objective standard. The judgment exercised by external groups contains biases, special interests or demands bearing on the institution being evaluated. Institutional effectiveness is contingent in part on perceptions both internal and external to the college.

Whether or not an organization is effective or perceived as effective is also based on its leadership, its administration. If administrators determine priorities, develop policies and implement actions, then their role is clearly significant. Consequently, to the degree that administrators carry out actions congruent with the perceptions of effectiveness held by the external groups that fund a college, then to that extent institutional survival is enhanced.

The administrator has two options (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978, p. 18):

1. Use persuasion to change or moderate the values of an external group and thus keep the activities as they are or
2. Support those values and change the institutional activities.

But, to determine whether option 1 or 2 ought to be considered, there first must be a way to assess institutional effectiveness. One way of assessing institutional effectiveness is to compare the priorities held by administrators versus those held by the significant external groups.

Such an assessment was undertaken in Arizona for an urban and rural community college district. The rural district, Central Arizona College, consists of two campuses and three centers amounting to 2,500 student FTE, 13 administrators, serving a total population of 93,000 with one major community of 15,000. The urban district, Maricopa Community Colleges, consists of seven campuses amounting to 30,000 student FTE, 37 administrators,

serving Phoenix, a metropolitan (urban-suburban) area with a total population of 1.5 million.

The following model was adopted from Pfeffer and Salancik (p. 87) to guide the process of assessing institutional effectiveness:

1. As described by Appendix B, the first step was to consider individually each of the 60 activity statements.
2. The scores on "important to do" and "fund with tax dollars" were averaged together.
3. The significant external groups were defined to be legislators, state board members and registered voters. Local governing board members were not included since they are considered an internal group due to their direct involvement with each college. Administrators (Associate dean or higher) were then asked to supply the potency weight for each of the three external groups on a scale of one (low) to ten (high) via a telephone survey.
4. These weights permitted a single combined ranking for the external groups, one for the urban district and one for the rural district, and these are detailed in Appendix C.
5. Step 5 compares and correlates these rankings of the external groups to the original rankings of administrators in the respective districts.

The result is the CIE. The coefficients of institutional effectiveness calculated by this process for an urban and a rural community college district in Arizona are detailed in Appendix C. These coefficients indicate the extent that administrators agree on what they say is important versus those whose opinion they believe ought to be important.

Results

The actual application of these concepts and calculations resulted in some interesting findings. It should be noted that the Coefficient of Institutional Effectiveness (CIE) would read 1.0 where complete agreement exists. The CIE for comparison between the activity rankings of administrators vs. those composite rankings of the weighted external groups are:

Rural Administrators with External Groups	.54
Urban Administrators with External Groups	.59

What this says is that some disagreement does exist in each district administrators' activity rankings and the rankings of those whose opinion are supposedly important. Secondly, it says that both college districts are not that far apart in the level or degree of disagreement.

What the CIE does not say is whether .54 or .59 is acceptable. In other words, is the CIE too low? How low does it get to be able to sense an institutional crisis? We do know from informal observations that both districts appear well managed and are sensitive to demands by responding with necessary programming. The issue of how low or high the CIE should be is one that depends on further data collection. Information from other colleges is necessary to develop a balance or norm on what can be expected as a range for the CIE.

Differences in Priority

Another piece of interesting information was obtained. It can be seen where the greatest disagreement on college activities exist per each district. Appendices D and E illustrate the top ten (10) activities with the level

of disagreement as shown by rank differences. As a convenience, the first five activities on each table have been retyped, while the second five are referenced by their number on the survey instrument.

Portions in each activity statement or item which are underlined represent boldface print in the survey instrument. In Appendix D, the first five (5) activity statements are worthy of examination because the differences in ranking change between administrators and the external groups are over 30. That is, since 60 items were the total, each of the first five activity statements jump in position by over half the ranks possible.

Generally, two types of rank differences occurred:

a) Administrators ranked an item high where external groups rank it low (e.g., #12 & #5) or

b) vice versa (e.g., #22 & #49)

We can conjecture a great deal about why such a disparity in activity support exists. This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of the analysis. In Appendix D an examination of activities 12, 22, 5, 49 and 36 (and 2, 25, 57, 16 & 44 for that matter) have one thing in common. They all concern activities about a clientele. The issue once again being supported is that the debate over what colleges do is not tied to function but to clientele served. It is through clientele that the external groups relate to the college.

Furthermore, in Appendix D number 12, administrators score that high - 15 in priority. External groups score number 12 much lower - 48. Could it be that the external groups see noncompletion of high school as a barrier while administrators do not because of their fuller understanding of the "open door?"

Appendix D also shows an opposite situation. Item number 22 is low, 54 for administrators and higher, 21 for external groups. The external groups perhaps see the mentally handicapped as a much-worthy clientele for services. On the other hand, administrators must deal with the practical considerations of program design, cost, appropriate staffing and ultimate success or failure.

The same analyses can be applied to Appendix E. Because of a time constraint, other conjectures about priority reversals cannot be covered. The essential point being made is that the CIE is a broad measure of the activities rankings between administrators and external groups. But more important, the actual rank differences can identify specific institutional activities for review.

Needs Assessment

It is in that review that the chief executive and administrators will decide what to do: option one, use persuasion on the external groups or option two, incorporate the values or demands of the external groups into institutional activities. The considerations here go beyond simply deciding what activities to emphasize, curtail or discontinue. Administrators may very well determine that the need to serve minority groups is a greater social good, worthy of institutional activity, even though the external groups rank it low. In such a case, adequate persuasion of external groups becomes the administrative task.

In summary, are each of the institutions effective? The answer is complex. First of all, the concept of institutional effectiveness deals with perceptions. Such perceptions over so many institutional activities

are too numerous to be resolved through one statistic, the CIE. What has to occur is an administrative examination of each activity for which there exists priority differences. This in turn leads to consideration of how internal priorities will be reconciled to the external group priorities critical to resource allocation and institutional survival. Will it be option one (persuasion of external groups) or two (acceptance of external groups' views)? And perhaps some compromise somewhere in-between.

For the moment, the CIE is a benchmark for each district against which future measures of the CIE can be taken. This could help assess overall growth or the lack thereof toward institutional effectiveness. Finally, more baseline data from other districts are needed to judge if .54 and .59 are "reasonable" expectations. Perhaps they are "high" CIE's but until a point of reference is developed a vacuum exists.

Reference Cited

Pfeffer, J. and Salancik, G.R., The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective. New York: Harper & Row, 1978.

Appendix A

Definition of Terms

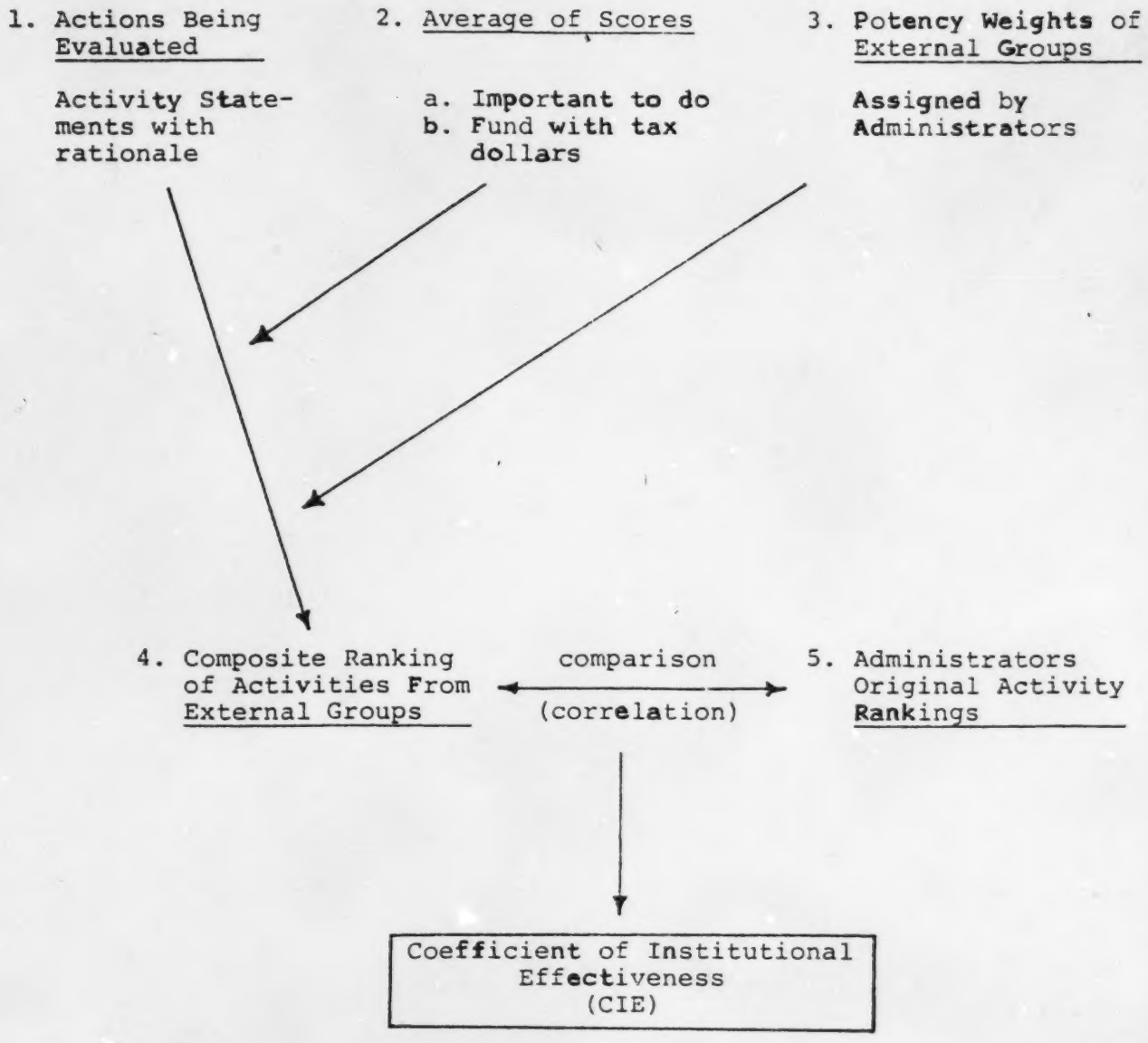
Activities or Activity Statements: the revised items of the survey instrument written in an action format with the institutional rationale for such an action.

Organizational or Institutional Effectiveness: the evaluative judgment of the organization's actions based on the demands or interests of external groups upon which the institution depends for resources and survival.

Coefficient of Institutional Effectiveness (CIE): the comparative measure (correlation) of what administrators say is important (activity rankings) versus the ranking of activities from the external groups whose opinion they believe ought to be important.

Appendix B

Summary of Procedure to Assess Institutional Effectiveness[1]



[1]Adapted from a model by Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978, p. 87.

Appencix C

I. Administrator Assigned Potency to Legislators, State Board Members & Registered Voters (External Groups)

Rural Administrator		Urban Administrator	
Registered Voter	6.6	Registered Voter	7.2
Legislator	6.1	State Board	5.8
State Board	5.9	Legislator	4.7

II. Coefficient of Institutional Effectiveness

.54 Rural Administrators with External Groups

.59 Urban Administrators with External Groups

Appendix D

Ten Greatest Differences in Rank Comparisons
Rural Administration vs. Composite of External Groups

Activity Statement	Adm Rank	Ext Grp Rank	Difference
12. Offer credit courses in the arts and sciences, the health, engineering and agricultural sciences, business and other academic areas to students who have never graduated from high school nor earned a G.E.D. diploma so that they can continue study toward a bachelor's degree in these fields at a college or university.	15	48	33
*22. Offer instruction in basic reading, writing and mathematics skills to mentally handicapped persons to prepare them for entry into the work force or to provide them with everyday life and survival skills.	54	21	33
5. Organize special support groups and provide counseling and tutoring services for ethnic and racial minority groups to assist them in benefiting from college courses and programs.	17	49	32
*49. Offer basic hands-on skills training and occupational courses and programs to mentally handicapped persons to prepare them for employment.	56	24	32
*36. Offer credit courses, certificates and associate degree programs to interested adults in the community at such easy-to-reach locations as shopping centers, public libraries and other public facilities for their convenience or to upgrade job-related skills.	14	46	32
2. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	39	11	28
*25. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	30	5	25
*57. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	9	31	22
16. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	44	23	21
44. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	12	32	20

* Activity Statements Common to Tables C & D

Appendix E

Ten Greatest Differences in Rank Comparisons
Urban Administration vs. Composite of External Groups

Activity Statement	Adm Rank	Ext Grp Rank	Difference
*22. Offer instruction in basic reading, writing and mathematics skills to mentally handicapped persons to prepare them for entry into the work force or to provide them with everyday life and survival skills.	54	19	35
*49. Offer basic hands-on skills training and occupational courses and programs to mentally handicapped persons to prepare them for employment.	55	22	33
*36. Offer credit courses, certificates and associate degree programs to interested adults in the community at such easy-to-reach locations as shopping centers, public libraries and other public facilities for their convenience or to upgrade job-related skills.	19	46	27
4. Provide special assistance, such as sign language interpreters and tutoring services, to deaf and hearing-impaired students to assure them equal access to college resources and programs.	32	6	26
17. Provide access to the college library and library services to all interested members of the local community as a community service.	34	9	25
*57. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	8	32	24
38. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	16	35	19
27. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	35	16	19
39. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	33	15	18
*25. (Refer to Survey Instrument)	21	4	17

* Activity Statements Common to Tables C & D

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